

## 7. SUNNY'S DISPOSITION

It was a warm night, and she glistened with a permanent glow.

"All you have to do is blink an eye, and legions come running."

"I think that you get the picture."

"So you've always get what you want?"

"I have been for so long that I can't remember when I didn't."

"Is that your prelude for me asking to buy you a drink?"

"I didn't think that you needed to ask. I thought you'd just hand me what I want."

"How would I know?"

"Grey Goose and tonic."

"A twist of lemon?"

"Lime!"

"I'm Tom."

"Sunny."

"Like a sunny day?"

She nods.

He felt pretty lucky that she had let him buy her a drink. This was just the opening that he needed.

"So, what's your secret, pretty girl?"

"What you see is what you get!"

"Everybody's got a secret."

"Not me!"

"You just hide it pretty well."

"So what do you do?"

"What do you need me to do?"

"Sit here, and buy me drinks all night. Are you good at that sort of thing?"

"I am. But I may have to borrow some money before the night is through."

"What do you do?"

"Something saucy and sexy."

"You are evasive. What do you do for a living?"

"Oh, that's what you want to know."

"And..."

"What if I told you that I was a fisherman?"

"I'd tell you that you just made quite a catch, but that won't even get you past the first round."

"You are working me for the right answer. What might that be?"

"That you run a mint, and you print your own money."

"Close! I'm a financial adviser."

"Meaning?"

"I can write my own checks and find the backing to make them pay out."

"Oh boy! A blank world!"

"Isn't that what you were expecting?"

“I was expecting better than the rest.”

“Exactly! So did I crack Sunny’s code.”

“Sunny’s code isn’t cracked that easily.”

“I thought a drink and a blank check did the trick.”

“Careful, hot shot. I may have to drain those engines of fuel before they ever get off the ground.”

“Huh?”

“I’m not that much of an open book.”

“So how do I open the book?”

“You’re going to have to risk a lot more if you expect this transaction to go your way.”

She perked up as if the sun had just appeared from behind a cloud.

“A lot of bluster, but nothing really to show.”

“I’m not going to get excited for every little bull that charges my way.”

“Well put, honey.”

He slides his hand on her hip which she quickly removes.

“You may be used to dealing with children, but that act is going to get you nowhere around here.”

“Are you looking for another drink?”

“I’m looking for a boy who’s going to have to hold his horses if he wants to get anywhere.”

“You’re mixing all the metaphors tonight.”

“Better to do a little mixing than to get lost in the mix.”

“That sounds reasonable.”

“So you catch my drift.”

“You’re looking for a little balance.”

“You’re just going to have to slow it down. I’m not looking to get snowed.”

“I believe you. So if I take my time, how do I know that my investment is going to pay off.”

“You’re so used to risking other people’s money that you’re not willing to make the risk on your own.”

“Remember that I’m writing a blank check. So I have to be very sure.”

“You’re never going to be as sure as you like.”

Tom took a sip from his drink. He looked at Sunny in the bar mirror. She was even more enticing than the moment that he first noticed her. She was working the light her way.

“You know quite a lot about me, but what do I know about you? Who is Sunny?”

“Sunny is a girl who gets what she wants. At least, that’s what you told me.”

“What is a heavenly creature like you doing in a dive like this?”

“I got spun around on my trip up the yellow brick road.”

“Still the mystery girl.”

For all her mystery, there was a strange immediacy in her presence. This was enough to make any contrary questions vanish.

“Is it time for that other drink.”

“Tommy boy, I’m doing just fine.”

Tom was getting afraid that some Lothario might scoop her up in the nick of time. She looked around the room just to tease him with this option.

“Is Sunny getting restless?”

“Relax. Sunny is doing just fine.”

Sunny seemed pretty experienced at playing this game. She was the pool shark who was reeling him in by making him think that he was making progress. She just sat back and watched the drama unfold before her eyes.

He wanted to call Sunny on her bluff. As if she was creating this metaphysical justification for her dissipated lifestyle. How successful could she be scoring guys in a place like this? But there was something in the upturn of her smile that made him want to believe any yarn that she was spinning.

He hardly said a thing. She knew that he was doing all the work. The ice was melting in her glass, but she could hardly take a chance on letting on to him that she needed anything. She turned the straw around in her glass.”

“Nervous?”

“Not at all.”

She drank from the glass.

He settled back in his chair. He wore a business suit. But he felt so comfortable in it, that it almost seemed casual. He took his privilege for granted. She thought that she could break down that allure just by staring him down. But he was much more assured than that. He sloughed off her challenge.

Despite his strict resolve, she did not yield. Others had tried to break her down. They had all solemnly retreated from this place none the wiser. Tom would be no different. She knew the room like the back of her hand. She understood how every shadow would break. All his victories were temporary. She saw what she wanted, and she gradually moved closer to her goal.

“Even though you’re here all the time, you can be a faithful lover?”

“That’s what I told you.”

“Why am I supposed to believe you?”

“There has to be some kind of risk involved on your part as well.”

“How would I know that it was all worth it?”

“You can’t tell by looking.”

“I don’t think that I’m the first guy to have made that mistake.”

“You have that much control over your passionate side?”

“I’m a triathlete. My business acumen is as sharp as can be. Everything that I do is informed by the same focused intensity. I have no room for pure intuition.”

“When you make love, you never let go.”

“I do in my own way. But I never let my passions destroy what I hold sacred.”

“Spoken by a man who likes to stay in control.”

“I get what I like.”

“You can never be that sure. Time has a way of changing things.”

“Exactly. That takes us back to my question: why should I trust you?”

“Why should you trust yourself?”

“I told you that I train my mind to control my body. Nothing extraneous.”

“You should be looking for a machine not a lover.”

“I have to know my limits.”

“You’re not afraid of being pushed.”

“Fear comes from lack of knowledge.”

“So you’re some kind of cyborg trying to get to know your opponent.”

“I wouldn’t say that.”

“I hope not. It doesn’t sound too pleasant. Can’t you ever let go? Don’t you like to have some fun?”

“I love to have fun. I just don’t want to get carried away.”

“You need a service not a free woman.”

“What?”

“You should just pay for sex. That way you’d have nothing to worry about.”

“I’m not that kind of guy.”

“But you’re not willing to give that much of yourself. How appealing is that?”

“I do what I can.”

“So you’re looking for some girl who wants to fuck your money.”

“That’s exactly what I don’t want. I’ve worked hard for what I got. I need to be cautious that I don’t make a stupid mistake, and let someone take it away.”

“We all must seem like easy prey in here. You come strutting in with your fortune and your attitude. And every girl just swoons over you.”

“It’s not quite like that.”

“Beggars can’t be choosers!”

“That’s not my line either.”

“Lovers can’t be losers.”

“Why don’t you take me back to your place and let me fuck your brains out?”

“I’m sure that line works real well on girls that you just meet.”

“I thought that we’ve got to know each other pretty good. I’d try it on you.”

“What do you think sex is to me?”

“It’s your wonder drug. You look around a place like this, and you realize that you can have every guy in the place. So you pick and choose just to make you feel that you’re at the top of your game. You wake up the next day and realize that it didn’t quite do the trick. But if you hadn’t have done it, you would have felt more inadequate. So you clean yourself up, and the next night you are perched on the same bar stool ready to have another go at making things right.”

“There doesn’t sound like much time for work. Or much else in my life.”

“What else is there? This is your Hollywood set.”

“So I’m going to listen to all this love talk on your part and rush home with you.”

“You’re going to come home with me as part of the deal. You hope that you’re going to affect me so deeply that I’m going to want to stay with you. And eventually, I’ll sign over everything I have to you. I’m your ticket out of here. So you don’t want to blow it.”

“How do you know all these things. I this part of your financial analysis.”

“I’ve seen the script. You’re the naughty girl. The one every girl wants to be. She plays the striptease for her guy. Or she thinks that her lovemaking is as torrid as a porno movie. But she’s afraid to take it to the next level. She always pulls back before she crosses the line. So she

always doubts her ability to keep her guy. There's always someone like you out there ready to make easy pickings of her man in a couple of minutes."

"So why should she care? I'm just the villain."

"In this version you get it all."

"I'm the wild whore on the weekends. And I'm the goody-goody during the week for work."

"I wasn't thinking about it quite so raw."

"How do you want to cast me?"

"I guess that's really up to you."

"You like playing these games."

"Isn't this par for the course?"

"You could try to get me to talk about my family."

"Your family?"

"There's not much that I'd like to say. I have parents who I don't seem much."

"What about your hopes for a family?"

"I think that I want a chance to begin things anew."

"Then you can watch versions of yourself on TV."

"That seems a lot less dangerous."

"Do you ever feel that you know too much to keep playing this role?"

"I can't step far away from my life to really know what role that is."

"You don't know."

"Know what?"

"What goes on in a place like this."

"I come in here with my friends. We hang out. We let off some steam. We get a little drunk now and then. What's the big deal?"

"The big deal is that this is who you are."

"This is who you are. You're sitting next to me, and you're trying to rub my body every second that you get in the hopes that I'll go home with you."

"You're telling me that you don't want to take me back to your place."

"I have been thinking about it."

"And that doesn't bother you. You meet some guy who you don't know, and the next second you're ready to hop in the sack with him."

"I don't recall you coming in here collecting for children's charities."

"That's different."

"Different how? You're a guy."

"I don't do this all the time."

"Who's to say that I do? I haven't even gone home with you. And you're even holding that against me."

"I'm just thinking out loud."

"You're trying to trip me up."

"You're telling me that you don't like to have sex."

"That's like asking me if I like sugar on my coffee. It's so far from left field that it really makes no sense."

“How could I make sense? This is how you have fun. This is what makes you satisfied.”

“You’re the one in a strange bar trolling for some fresh meat. And you’re calling me weird. I know who I am. Do you?”

“I don’t get it.”

“You don’t get it. You’re the one who’s been grilling me.”

“I’m just curious. I’ve just been looking for something to talk about.”

“Talk about? You’re telling me that there’s something wrong with me because I approached you.”

“I didn’t say that exactly. I admit that I started talking to you first.”

“So what’s the big deal?”

“Just the familiarity that you offer to guys that you don’t even know.”

“What brought you in this place? Were you looking for some nuns?”

“The thought had crossed my mind.”

“You’re not telling me that there’s something wrong with me.”

“That I don’t know.”

“So there could be something wrong with me.”

“There could be something wrong with me.”

“So what’s the big deal? I invite you over for a drink, and you think that I’m mentally unbalanced.”

“I never said that.”

“Then what?”

“I said that it was a little weird for me to invite a stranger over to my place.”

“A little.”

“You would have come over.”

“Sure.”

“So what’s the big problem? It’s not as if you’ve never brought girls back to your place.”

“I just wonder what makes you so forthcoming?”

“I’m a friendly person.”

“But you just can’t be friends like that to everyone.”

“I’m not. I picked you out because I thought you were kind of special.”

“And that’s something that you can judge in just a couple of hours.”

“Is there some secret question that I should get you to answer? First, you want me because I’m some kind of challenge. And then you think that you’re going to get me leave with you, and then you think that I’m too easy.”

“But you do this all the time.”

“I didn’t say that.”

“Then what?”

“You think that I’m messed up. Why did you want me in the first place?”

“You had that quality. A little vulnerable and a little off her head.”

“And now you want to blame me for the way that I am.”

“You like teasing guys.”

“I tell it like it is. You don’t like that kind of brashness.”

“It makes me wonder what’s behind it.”

“A bad childhood.”

“Really?”

“What do you want to hear? What would make you feel good about being such an asshole? It’s not as if you’re here to take advantage of these poor girls. No, they give in to types like you because they’re loose girls. All because they’ve had terrible childhoods.”

“Maybe you just like to have fun too.”

“And I know that you’ve got what it takes to take a girl like me to the top.”

“What can I say to that?”

“You could compliment so that you might distract me.”

“What brings you here?”

“I come here to escape.”

“Does it work?”

“Most of the time.”

“How can it be an escape if it always turns out the same?”

“I don’t think about it that way. I just show up. And I have fun.”

“You got a job at a hair salon. And you were so good at turning images in your head into things that people could actually see that you started to believe that you had a special power to change the world. So you started hanging out at places like this in the hope that someone might discover your talent. They’d just look at your brilliance and realize that you understood a deeper truth.”

“Did you think that one up all on your own?”

“Is that you Sunny?”

“You want me to have a simple little story like that.”

“What do you have in mind?”

“I could tell you the one about my step-father.”

“I’m all ears.”

“Sure you are because you’ve already made your mind what you want to hear.”

“And what is that?”

“Anything that makes me more helpless in your eyes. The poor girl who couldn’t do anything on her own so now she wants to do it all on her own just to make up.”

“You want me to tell the story.”

“Go ahead! I said that I was all ears.”

“You learned that you could get men to do you all kinds of favors if you just looked pretty. And you hated being the object of their fantasies. But you could use sex just to help you forget your trouble.”

“What do you want? Do you want me to remember you, or do you want me to forget?”

“This is not how I play.”

“Me neither!”

“Then your life is like a maze. And the deeper that you get into it, the harder that it is to get out.”

“Ha ha! Nice try. I come here. I meet guys. I talk to them. I play along with their dreams about me. I let them buy me drinks. They think that there is something wrong. Then I just go home on my own. And that is enough for me.”

“Sometimes you take these guys back to your place.”

“I’d take you back to my place if that’s what you were looking for. But I’d like something in return.”

“What? Money?”

“I’m not that kind of girl.”

“You want love. It’s not going to happen that easily.”

“It probably is never going to happen. I just want to know that you have something more to offer me.”

“A marriage contract.”

“A pre-nup!”

“So you are worth more than that?”

“More than what.”

“Enough that you might need to protect your assets.”

“Is that why you want to hang out with me? That I can get out of here for good.”

“I can make you feel really good.”

“Do you want me to do the same for you?”

“Do you play fair?”

“I play rough.”

“I came here looking for rough.”

“What’s your family going to think of me?”

“They’ll think that you’re a gold-digger. But they’ll warm up to you in the end.”

“You think that I’m going to go for a deal like that.”

“You will in the end.”

“But you’ll still mistrust me.”

“I just don’t know what you’re about.”

“I know what I’m about. I just want to be with someone who can care about me. But what do you want? Someone who can solve your word games. I don’t take to puzzles. They only work to the advantage of the puzzle maker.”

“Sometimes it’s good to let someone else do the entertaining.”

“I’m all up to that. I just can’t take all this third-degree.”

“I could try to be romantic.”

“Flowers and chocolates aren’t going to cut it at this point.”

“The damage has been done. How do we ease the pain?”

“How we always ease the pain. I take you home, and I fuck your brains out. But that’s how you wanted it in the first place. You want to be with someone just so that you can forget yourself. I’m not the one with a problem. You are.”

“So how do you propose to settle it.”

“You’re the man on the mission. You’ve got to figure that out.”

“You’re not going to help.”

“I don’t get all wound up like you. If I want to do something, I just do it. And when it’s done, it’s the past. No regrets. If I can make something more of it, that’s great. But I just let it go. The book closes, and I just say good bye!”

“Let’s make some of that kind of fun.”



“We’re back to where we started. You get what you want. And I just run off home like a good little girl.”

“You came her to have fun. And you’re a grown-up. If something happens, it happens.”

“But you have a way of standing back and not letting anything happen. You’ve got to make more of an initiative. At least, make me think that you care.”

“You are making this difficult.”

“It is difficult. A girl still wants to believe. You expect that I see you coming in here, and I figure it’s Mister Charming. Why don’t I give him a blow job in the bathroom, and that will make me feel good about myself.”

“You are playing nasty.”

“I didn’t see the flowers and the box of chocolates in your hands.”

“There’s still time.”

“We know a little too much for that to work this time around.”

“There’s always Valentine’s Day and birthdays.”

“You are thinking ahead. Why don’t you enter my birthday into your phone while we’re at it.”

“It’s good to have a reminder.”

“A reminder that I still can make you feel good. All this talk has really worked up my appetite.”

“You want to eat at this hour.”

“That’s not quite what I had in mind.”

She lets him caress her neck. Then he kisses it. He tries to kiss her on the lips, but she gently pushes him away.

“I told you that I’m not that easy.”

“It’s almost last call. And I’m not tired.”

“If I go home with you, how am I going to be sure that you’ll call me?”

“That’s where you have to make the extra effort.”

“More dirty talk.”

“Haven’t we been talking dirty all night?”

“I’ve been trying to come up for air, and you’ve kept dragging me down in this murky sea.”

“I’m going to need another drink if I’m going to make this happen. Do you want one?”

“I’ll pass. I’m going to need my wits about me.”

Tom wasn’t used to this kind of resistance. He usually would have had a girl falling over him. She was still playing it cool. There was something about her magic that was overwhelming for him. She knew that she could ask for the world, and he would give it up.

She needed to collect herself. She had left too much of herself on the bar room floor. A quick escape was more to her liking. On the other hand, she had nothing to show for all this effort. Ultimately, he brought a lot to the table, and she wouldn’t mind walking away a winner. She just didn’t want to get burned.

“Your place or mine?”

“Do you have a bar at your place?”

“I’ve got it all.

She imagined ending up in a luxury apartment. It was all playing into his court. She didn't want to be taken advantage of. That was the theme of her night. She hated to admit that she was falling for this pompous ass. But he made such an effort to be charming. She needed to take up on his offer without getting burned.

"Do you have a car?"

"Yeah!"

"You can follow me?"

"You haven't had too much to drink."

She had tried to limit her intake. Despite his inclination to control the situation, he had just let loose.

While he was making drinks, she wandered through his apartment to try to get a clearer image of who she was dealing with. She hadn't slipped for a second with him. And he had opened up his world to her. She wasn't going to let him turn the tables at this point.

She knew the kind of girl that he thought that he was getting. Someone who used sex as a way to dull the pain. Someone who'd easily accept his rejection that morning. She still needed to play it cool.

She appeared to drink from the glass. Then she laid it on the coaster on the coffee table. He was at home. And he really let his guard down. No more Mr. Businessman!"

"Come over, and sit next to me."

She could already feel him inside of her. She hated that look of triumph on his face.

"I'll sit here for now."

"I bring you back to my place, and now you've turned into a cold fish."

"If I have sex with you, you're not going to call me again."

"It depends on how good the sex is."

"You're pretty plastered. How good is it going to be?"

"Low blow!"

"I'm just calling it like I see it."

"But you are interested."

"Let's just say that I'm not that tired. I don't have much to do tomorrow. And I wanted to see where our conversation would take us."

"So you're going to drive home after drinking that much."

"I've barely touched the drink that you've given me. And I've already driven this far."

"Why did you come back here with me?"

"I don't know. I really don't know why?"

"You're telling me that you can just walk out the door on your own."

"I didn't think that I had the strength to. But now, I can't imagine that I have any other choice."

"You like to have fun. You're attracted to me."

"Be honest with me. We have sex with people because we want to see that side of them that they try to hide from the world. But you haven't been able to hide a thing."

"I know you. Just one kiss, and you melt."

"You want to try that. Just one kiss. I can't walk away from one kiss."

He moved in his seat as if he expects her to come over to him. She just stood up and

looked down at him.

“I am free to leave.”

“What about the kiss?”

“I’ve already got that.”

“You’ve settled for a lot less in the past.”

“I’m not the same girl.”

“What about the story?”

“The gold-digger. Or is there another one?”

“The loving wife.”

“I’m going to believe that one. I’ll hold my nose for tonight because eventually you’re going to propose marriage to me. What kind of little girl believes that kind of fairy tale?”

“The one who has no other.”

“I see an opportunity, and I take it.”

“For what? You’re going to date another bartender. Or worse, a bar back. Or you’ll give some guy a blow job just for giving you a ride home.”

“I’ve got my own ride.”

“You don’t know enough to be this way.”

“Huh?”

“There’s no way that a girl like you could ever be that intelligent.”

“Excuse me.”

“I know you. When you smell it, you’ve got to have it!”

“I didn’t see the script when I came in.”

“You are leaving?”

“You don’t even have to show me the door.”

“I didn’t get your number.”

“You got my birthday. You’ll know where to find me.”